

Introduction

Tourism in Virginia is big business. It is also big business in the city of Fredericksburg and in Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties. The most recent figures (1998) from the Virginia Tourism Corporation estimate that Virginia tourism is an \$11.7 billion-dollar industry (domestic plus international expenditures). Of this total, Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania and Stafford combined generate \$233,320,000 in revenues for a 5% market share for the State of Virginia.

Recent growth in tourism nationally and in the Southeast has resulted in the capturing of 21.6% of the travel market by the Southeast.

Traditionally, the development of tourism has simply been equated with “promote it and they will come” or “build it and they will come.” As the potential for “growing” tourism increases and the competition between states and destination areas escalates, it is essential that destination-marketing organizations (DMOs) do the following. They must:

- assess their product
- identify the preferences of their customers
- identify the carrying capacity of the available resources
- develop strategies and tactics that will insure success in the future.

The successful marketing programs and tourism product development efforts of the future will insure that the expectations of residents and visitors are matched or exceeded by high quality experiences.

As the historical attractions that have brought visitors to your area for decades lose market share with the younger generation’s desire for more interactive experiences, F.A.T. must work to reinvent the positioning of the local tourism product and repackage it for regional impact. Based on the current situation, it is wise for FAT to conduct research to determine the economic impact and potential for increased visitation to the area. With so many people visiting attractions throughout the Fredericksburg area it only makes sense for three entities to combine their promotional efforts and capitalize on the area’s potential share of the economic impact from Virginia’s third largest industry – tourism. A focused regional marketing effort can drive increased visitation to local historic sites, attractions, shops and restaurants while increasing lodging occupancy.

The enclosed report was developed utilizing professional research and reconnaissance methods developed by Dr. Larry Gutske, Ph.D, North Carolina State University. The report analyzes the current status of tourism in the City of Fredericksburg and the counties of Spotsylvania and Stafford, the current visitor profile and perception of those visiting the area and presents a strategic plan for the future development and growth of tourism for the Fredericksburg area.